

Supply

In the case of the western Arctic, the hon. member knows that in the land claims process Métis people are being regarded as having equivalency to status Indian people. I think that is a step in the right direction.

I could not really speculate. I suppose it will take until after a federal election to come to terms with constitutional questions again. I could not speculate on how quickly that aspect of the Métis agenda might be advanced.

I just want to say in conclusion that we are all delighted to see Mr. Yvon Dumont named as Lieutenant-Governor of Manitoba. That is another measure of recognition of the important and rich contribution the Métis have given to Canada.

• (1850)

In regard to the Horton River DEW Line site, our government announced the \$100 million Arctic Environmental Protection Strategy. I had the pleasure of making that announcement two years ago. One important aspect of that project is the clean-up of Arctic DEW Line sites and other unsightly dump sites across the Arctic. We are trying to facilitate these projects where local aboriginal people will do the work under supervision and at the same time get the best value for money so there is a competitive process of receiving proposals.

I cannot tell the hon. member for sure where the proposal she spoke of from the Inuvialuit Regional Corporation is, but I can certainly get her that material by way of a letter or report tomorrow.

Mr. Simon de Jong (Regina—Qu'Appelle): Mr. Speaker, I listened with interest to the remarks of the minister. I noted the minister went on at some length on the anticipated changes in his department.

The minister stated the recognition of the inherent right to self-government. Logically, from that flows that his Department of Indian Affairs and Northern Development becomes much more responsive to the needs of the aboriginal people, that the department will start listening to the advice and the direction of the aboriginal people. I commend the minister if that indeed is the direction.

What puzzles me is that about three weeks ago a delegation from the Federation of Saskatchewan Indian Nations pointed out there was going to be a 31 per cent

decrease in the economic development funds available in the province of Saskatchewan for economic development on and off the reserves.

What struck me besides the fact that there was a 10 per cent cut in the department, of course there was no consultation. One can make an argument, given the dire economic conditions. What struck me the most was that the people of the FSIN heard about it through the back door. There was a leak in the department. It was a decision that had already been made. The FSIN was never consulted. Nobody from the department went to the FSIN and told it of the situation, that there would be a reduction in the budget, and that it should indicate where the reduction should be. The bureaucrats made that decision.

When is the minister's policy of having the department more sensitive to the aboriginal people and consulting with them going to come into effect? Why was this decision to reduce the economic development taken unilaterally and not after consultation?

Mr. Siddon: Mr. Speaker, I appreciate the hon. member's question. The fact of the matter is that as with all governments these days, this government has a limited budget. The budget of my department has grown by \$285 million this year. That is almost a 7 per cent increase. The budget of government programs for aboriginal peoples has grown \$350 million, a 7 per cent increase on an over-all projected spending of over \$5 billion.

Most government departments have their spending frozen. In the case of certain projects there are cuts of 10 per cent in grants and contributions for example.

It is necessary to decide how to preserve the important programs such as housing, where the funds were not diminished, such as education, where the funds were increased, such as welfare, social support, and child and family counselling. A decision had to be made about how we could fit within the budget.

In the final analysis the access to the treasury can only be had by the government on behalf of Parliament. Therefore it is not possible to have budgetary or over-all spending decisions the subject of consultation in advance. Funding for economic development this year will be \$347 million, plus the funding of some \$200 million in Pathways to Success.